

467  
1  
L4 A2  
copy 1

1865-1900

---

# THE CONFEDERACY

AND

## THE TRANSVAAL:

A PEOPLE'S OBLIGATION TO

ROBERT E. LEE

BY

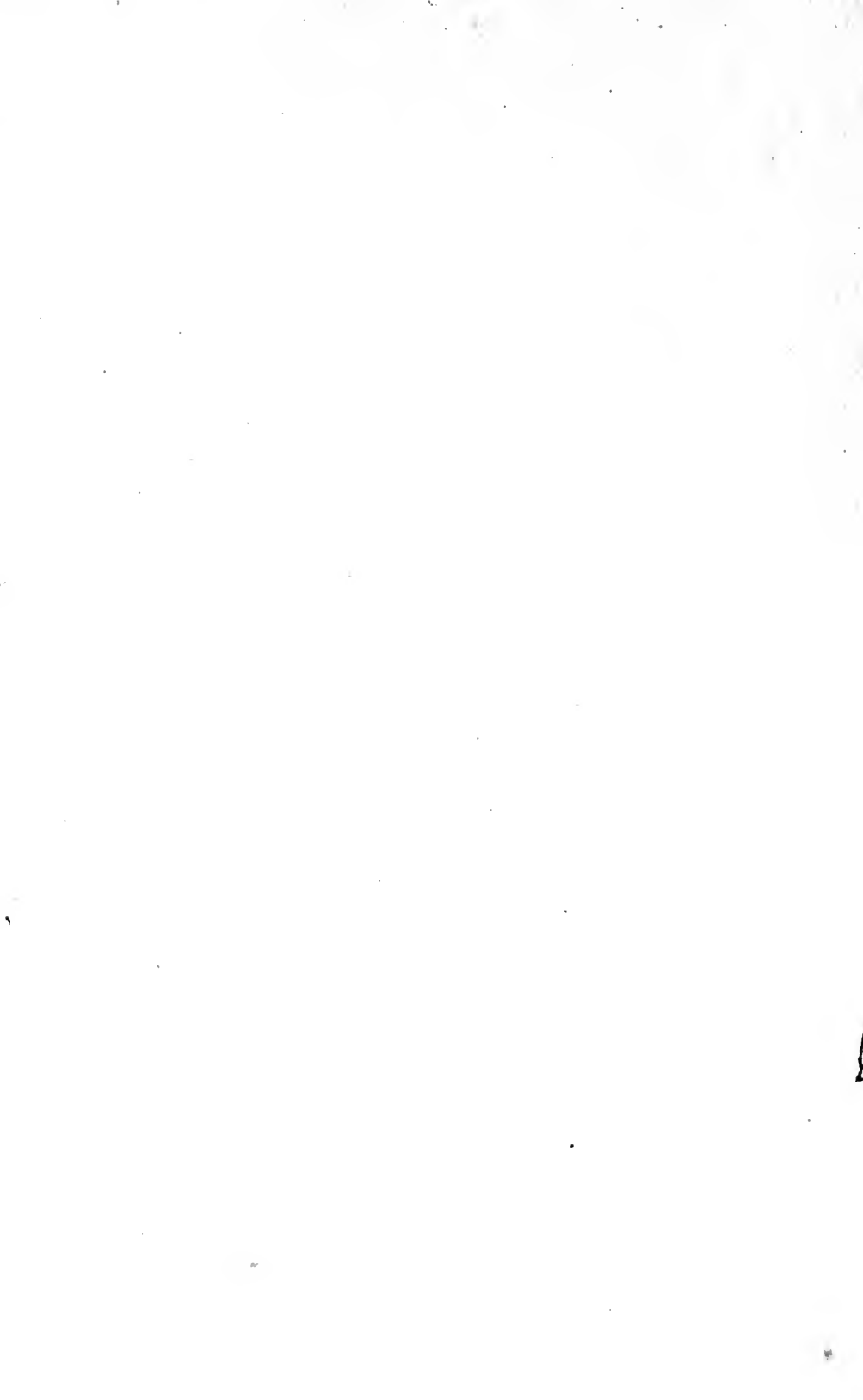
CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS



A PAPER READ BEFORE THE AMERICAN  
ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY, AT ITS ANNUAL  
MEETING IN WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS,  
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30TH, 1901



HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & CO.  
BOSTON  
1901



1865-1900

---

# THE CONFEDERACY

AND

# THE TRANSVAAL:

A PEOPLE'S OBLIGATION TO

ROBERT E. LEE

BY

CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS



A PAPER READ BEFORE THE AMERICAN  
ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY, AT ITS ANNUAL  
MEETING IN WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS,  
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30TH, 1901



HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & CO.  
BOSTON  
1901

2000000

2000000

## THE CONFEDERACY AND THE TRANSVAAL

---

THE present seems a sufficiently proper occasion, and this a not inappropriate place, to call attention to a matter sufficiently germane to the purpose of this Society, though hardly as yet antiquarian. Historical in its character, it conveys a lesson of grave present import.

One of the most unhappy, and, to those concerned in it, disastrous wars since the fall of Napoleon, is, in South Africa, now working itself to a close apparently still remote, and in every way unsatisfactory. There is reason to think that the conflict was unnecessary in its inception; that by timely and judicious action it might long since have been brought to a close; and that it now continues simply because the parties to it cannot be brought together to discuss and arrive at a sensible basis of adjustment, — a basis upon which both in reality would be not unwilling to agree. Nevertheless, as the cable dispatches daily show, the contest drags wearily along, to the probable destruction of one of the combatants, to the great loss of the other, and, so far as can be seen, in utter disregard of the best interests of both.

My immediate purpose, however, is to draw attention to the hair-breadth escape we ourselves had from a similar experience, now thirty-six years ago, and to assign to whom it belongs the credit for that escape. In one word, in the strong light of passing events, I think it now opportune to set forth the debt of gratitude this reunited country of ours — Union and Confederate, North and South — owes to Robert E. Lee, of Virginia.

Most of those here — for this is not a body of young men — remember the state of affairs which existed in the United States, especially in what was then known as the Confederate States, or the rebellious portion of the United States, in April, 1865. Such as are not yet as mature as that memory implies, have read and heard thereof. It was in every respect almost the identical state of affairs which existed in South Africa at the time of the capture of Pretoria by General Roberts, in June a year ago.

On the 2d of April, 1865, the Confederate army found itself compelled to abandon the lines in front of Petersburg; and the same day — a very famous Sabbath — Jefferson Davis, hastily called from the church services he was attending, left Richmond to find, if he might, a new seat of government, at Danville. The following morning our forces at last entered the rebel capital. This was on a Monday; and, two days later, the Confederate President issued from Danville his manifesto, declaring to the people of the South that “We have now entered upon a new phase of the struggle. Relieved from the necessity of guarding particular points, our army will be free to move from point to point, to strike the enemy in detail far from his base. If, by the stress of numbers, we should be compelled to a temporary withdrawal from her limits [Virginia], or those of any other border State, we will return until the baffled and exhausted enemy shall abandon in despair his endless and impossible task of making slaves of a people resolved to be free.” The policy and line of military action herein indicated were precisely those laid down and pursued by the Boer leaders during the last sixteen months.

It is unnecessary for me even to refer to the series of events which followed our occupation of Richmond, and preceded the surrender of Appomattox. It is sufficient to say that on the Friday which followed the momentous Sunday, the capitulation of the Army of Northern Vir-

ginia had become inevitable. Not the less for that, the course thereafter to be pursued as concerned further resistance on the part of the Confederacy was still to be decided. As his Danville proclamation showed, Jefferson Davis, though face to face with grave disaster, had not for an instant given up the thought of continuing the struggle. To do so was certainly practicable, — far more practicable than now in South Africa, both as respects forces in the field and the area of country to be covered by the invader. Foreign opinion, for instance, was on this point settled; it was in Europe assumed as a certainty of the future that the conquest of the Confederacy was “impossible.” The English journals had always maintained, and still did maintain, that the defeat of Lee in the field, or even the surrender of all the Confederate armies, would be but the close of one phase of the war and the opening of another, — the final phase being a long, fruitless effort to subdue a people, at once united and resolved, occupying a region so vast that it would be impossible to penetrate every portion of it, much less to hold it in peaceful subjection. As an historical fact, on this point the scales, on the 9th of April, 1865, hung wavering in the balance; a mere turn of the hand would decide which way they were to incline. Thus, on the morning of that momentous day, it was an absolutely open question, an even chance, whether the course which subsequently was pursued should be pursued, or whether the leaders of the Confederacy would adopt the policy which President Kruger and Generals Botha and De Wet have in South Africa more recently adopted, and are now pursuing.

The decision rested in the hands of one man, the commander of the Army of Northern Virginia. Fairly reliable and very graphic accounts of what took place at General Lee’s headquarters in the early morning hours of April 9th have either appeared in print or been told in

conversation, and to two of these accounts I propose to call attention. Apparently the second of the interviews described followed close on the first, not more than a couple of hours intervening between them. Of the first, I find this account in a book recently published by John Sargent Wise, entitled "The End of an Era." John Sargent Wise is the son of Henry A. Wise, once prominent in our national politics. Governor of Virginia in the later "fifties," the father was subsequently a brigadier-general in the Confederate service. Though in 1865 but a youth of nineteen, John S. Wise was a hot Confederate, and had already been wounded in battle. At the time now in question he chanced to have been sent by Jefferson Davis, then on his way to Danville, with dispatches to Lee; and while seeking Lee's headquarters he came, in the early morning of April 9th, across his father, Governor and General Wise, in bivouac with his brigade. The father was then nearly sixty years of age, but the son found him wrapped in a blanket, stretched on the ground like a common soldier, and asleep among his men. A typical Southern "fire-eater" of the extreme type, Henry A. Wise was an out-and-out Secessionist and Confederate. Aroused from an uneasy slumber, almost the first wish he expressed was to see General Lee, and he asked impetuously of his whereabouts. The son knew where the headquarters of the Confederate commander were, and the two started together to go to them. John S. Wise has described vividly the aspect of affairs as they passed along: "The roads and fields were filled with stragglers. They moved looking behind them, as if they expected to be attacked and harried by a pursuing foe. Demoralization, panic, abandonment of all hope, appeared on every hand. Wagons were rolling along without any order or system. Caissons and limber-chests, without commanding officers, seemed to be floating aimlessly upon a tide of disorganization. Rising to his full height, casting a

glance around him like that of an eagle, and sweeping the horizon with his long arm and bony forefinger, my father exclaimed: 'This is the end!' It is impossible to convey an idea of the agony and the bitterness of his words and gestures." Then follows this description of the interview which ensued: —

"We found General Lee on the rear portico of the house that I have mentioned. He had washed his face in a tin basin, and stood drying his beard with a coarse towel as we approached. 'General Lee,' exclaimed my father, 'my poor, brave men are lying on yonder hill more dead than alive. For more than a week they have been fighting day and night, without food, and, by God, sir, they shall not move another step until somebody gives them something to eat!'

"'Come in, general,' said General Lee soothingly. 'They deserve something to eat, and shall have it; and meanwhile you shall share my breakfast.' He disarmed everything like defiance by his kindness.

"It was but a few moments, however, before my father launched forth in a fresh denunciation of the conduct of General Bushrod Johnson<sup>1</sup> in the engagement of the sixth. I am satisfied that General Lee felt as he did; but, assuming an air of mock severity, he said, 'General, are you aware that you are liable to court-martial and execution for insubordination and disrespect toward your commanding officer?'

"My father looked at him with lifted eyebrows and flashing eyes, and exclaimed: 'Shot! You can't afford to shoot the men who fight for cursing those who ran away. Shot! I wish you would shoot me. If you don't, some Yankee probably will within the next twenty-four hours.'

"Growing more serious, General Lee inquired what he thought of the situation.

<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere in his book (pp. 358, 359), and in another connection, J. S. Wise is equally severe in his characterization of Bushrod Johnson.

“ ‘Situation?’ said the bold old man. ‘There is no situation! Nothing remains, General Lee, but to put your poor men on your poor mules and send them home in time for spring ploughing. This army is hopelessly whipped, and is fast becoming demoralized. These men have already endured more than I believed flesh and blood could stand, and I say to you, sir, emphatically, that to prolong the struggle is murder, and the blood of every man who is killed from this time forth is on your head, General Lee.’

“This last expression seemed to cause General Lee great pain. With a gesture of remonstrance, and even of impatience, he protested: ‘Oh, general, do not talk so wildly. My burdens are heavy enough. What would the country think of me, if I did what you suggest?’

“ ‘Country be d——d!’ was the quick reply. ‘There is no country. There has been no country, general, for a year or more. You are the country to these men. They have fought for you. They have shivered through a long winter for you. Without pay or clothes, or care of any sort, their devotion to you and faith in you have been the only things which have held this army together. If you demand the sacrifice, there are still left thousands of us who will die for you. You know the game is desperate beyond redemption, and that, if you so announce, no man or government or people will gainsay your decision. That is why I repeat that the blood of any man killed hereafter is upon your head.’

“General Lee stood for some time at an open window, looking out at the throng now surging upon the roads and in the fields, and made no response.”<sup>1</sup>

It will be remembered that John Sargent Wise was individually present at this conversation, a youth of nineteen. I have as little respect as any one well can have for the recollection of thirty years since as a basis of

<sup>1</sup> *The End of an Era*, pp. 433-435.

history. Nevertheless, it would seem quite out of the question that a youth of only nineteen could have been present at such a scene as is here described, and that the words which then passed, and the incidents which occurred, should not have been indelibly imprinted upon his memory. I am disposed, therefore, to consider this reliable historical material. Meanwhile, it so chanced that I am able to supplement it by similar testimony from another quarter.

Some years ago I was, for a considerable period, closely associated with General E. P. Alexander, who, in its time, had been Chief of Artillery in Longstreet's famous corps; and it was General Alexander who, on the morning of July 3, 1863, opened on the Union line at Gettysburg what Hancock described as "a most terrific and appalling cannonade," intended to prepare the way for the advance of Pickett's division. In April, 1865, General Alexander was, if my recollection serves me right, in command of the artillery of the Army of Northern Virginia. General Alexander's memory I found always singularly tenacious as well as accurate, and he delighted in reminiscence of the great war; so he many times repeated to me, or to others in my hearing, the details of an interview he had with Lee on the morning of the 9th of April, not long, it would seem, after Wise had left him. Of what he said, I have since retained a vivid recollection.

On the morning in question, General Alexander had occasion to report to Lee. He realized that the Army of Northern Virginia was then in a desperate situation. Moreover, as he well knew, the limber-chests were running low; his arm of the service was in no condition to go into another engagement. Yet the idea of an abandonment of the cause had never occurred to him as among the probabilities. All night he had lain awake, thinking as to what was next to be done. Finally he had come to the conclusion that there was but one course to pursue.

The Confederate army, while nominally capitulating, must in reality disperse, and those composing it should be instructed, whether individually or as part of detachments, to get each man to his own State in the most direct way and shortest possible time, and report to the governor thereof, with a view to a further and continuous resistance.

Thus, exactly what is now taking place in South Africa was to take place in the Confederacy. General Alexander told me that, as he passed his batteries on his way to headquarters, the men called out to him, in cheery tones, that there were still some rounds remaining in the caissons, and that they were ready to renew the fight. He found Lee seated on the trunk of a fallen tree before a dying campfire. He was dressed in uniform, and invited Alexander to take a seat beside him. He then asked his opinion of the situation, and of the course proper to be pursued. Full of the idea which dominated his mind, Alexander proceeded at once to propound his plan, for it seemed to him the only plan worthy of consideration. As he went on, General Lee, looking steadily into the fire with an abstracted air, listened patiently. Alexander said his full say. A brief pause ensued, which Lee finally broke in somewhat these words: "No! General Alexander, that will not do. You must remember we are a Christian people. We have fought this fight as long as, and as well as, we knew how. We have been defeated. For us, as a Christian people, there is now but one course to pursue. We must accept the situation; these men must go home and plant a crop, and we must proceed to build up our country on a new basis. We cannot have recourse to the methods you suggest." I remember being deeply impressed with Alexander's comment, as he repeated these words of Lee. They had evidently burned themselves into his memory. He said: "I had nothing more to say. I felt that the man had soared way up above me, — he dominated me completely. I rose from beside him;

silently mounted my horse; rode back to my command; and waited for the order to surrender."

Then and there, Lee decided its course for the Confederacy. And I take it there is not one solitary man in the United States to-day, North or South, who does not feel that he decided right.

The Army of Northern Virginia, it will be remembered, laid down its arms on the 9th of April. But General Joseph Johnston was in command of another Confederate army then confronting Sherman, in North Carolina, and it was still an open question what course he would pursue. His force numbered over 40,000 combatants; more than the entire muster of the Boers in their best estate. Lee's course decided Johnston's. S. R. Mallory, who was present on the occasion, has left a striking account of a species of council held at Greensboro, North Carolina, on the evening of the 10th of April, by Jefferson Davis and the members of his cabinet, with General Johnston. Davis, stubborn in temper and bent on a policy of continuous irregular resistance, expressed the belief that the disasters recently sustained, though "terrible," should not be regarded as "fatal." "I think," he added, "we can whip the enemy yet, if our people will turn out." When he ceased speaking, a pause ensued. Davis at last said, "We should like to hear your views, General Johnston." Whereupon Johnston, without preface or introduction, and with a tone and manner almost spiteful, remarked in his terse, concise, demonstrative way, as if seeking to condense thoughts that were crowding for utterance: "My views are, sir, that our people are tired of the war, feel themselves whipped, and will not fight."<sup>1</sup>

We all know what followed. Lee's great military prestige and moral ascendancy made it easy for some of the remaining Confederate commanders — like Johnston — to follow the precedent he set; while others of them —

<sup>1</sup> Alfrend's *Life of Jefferson Davis*, pp. 622-626.

like Kirby Smith — found it imposed upon them. A firm direction had been given to the course of events ; an intelligible policy was indicated. I have in my possession a copy of the “Index,” the weekly journal published in London during our Civil War. The official organ of the Confederate agents in Europe, it was intended for the better enlightenment of foreign opinion, more especially the English press. The surrender of Lee was commented upon editorially in the issue of that paper for April 27th. “The war is far from concluded,” it declared. “A strenuous resistance and not surrender was the unalterable determination of the Confederate authorities . . . and if the worst comes to the worst there is the trans-Mississippi department, where the remnant of [Johnston’s] army can find a shelter, and a new and safe starting-point.” On the 11th of May following, the surrender of Johnston’s army was announced on the same terms as that of Lee ; but, in summing up the situation, the “Index” still found “the elements of a successful or at least a protracted resistance.” On the 25th of May, it had an article entitled “Southern Resistance in Texas,” in which it announced that, “Such a war will be fierce, ferocious, and of long duration,” — in a word, such an expiring struggle as we are to-day witnessing in South Africa. In its issue of June 1st the “Index” commented on “The capture of President Davis ;” and then, and not until then, forestalling the trans-Mississippi surrender of Kirby Smith, brought to it by the following mail, it raised the wailing cry, “*Fuit Ilium*. . . . The South has fallen.”

Comparing the situation which then existed in the Confederacy with that now in South Africa, it must also be remembered that General Lee assumed the responsibility he did assume, and decided the policy to be pursued in the way it was decided, under no ameliorating conditions. Politically, unconditional surrender was insisted upon ; and Lee’s surrender was, politically, unconditional.

Even more so was Johnston's ; for, in Johnston's case, the modifying terms of capitulation agreed on in the first place between him and Sherman were roughly disallowed at Washington, and the truce, by an order coming thence, abruptly terminated. Then Johnston did what Lee had already done ; ignoring Davis, he surrendered his army.

In the case of the Confederacy, also, an absolutely unconditional political surrender implied much. The Emancipation Proclamation of January, 1863, which confiscated the most valuable chattel property of the Confederacy, remained the irreversible law of the land. The inhabitants of the South were, moreover, as one man disfranchised. When they laid down their arms they had before them, first, a military government, and, after that, the supremacy of their former slaves. A harder fate for a proud people to accept could not well be imagined. The bitterness of feeling, the hatred, was, too, extreme. It may possibly be argued that the conditions in this country then were different from those now in South Africa, inasmuch as here it was a civil war, a conflict between communities of the same race and speech, involving the vital question of the supremacy of law. This argument, however, seems to imply that, in case of strife of this description, a general severity may fairly be resorted to in excess of that permissible between nations, — in other words, that we are justified in treating our brethren with greater harshness than we would treat aliens in blood and speech. Obviously, this is a questionable contention.

It might possibly also be claimed that the bitterness of civil war is not so insurmountable as that of one involving a question of race dominance. Yet it is difficult to conceive bitterness of greater intensity than existed between the sections at the close of our Civil War. There is striking evidence of this in the book of Mr. Wise, from which I have already quoted. Toward its close he

speaks of the death of Lincoln. He then adds the following : —

“ Perhaps I ought to chronicle that the announcement was received with demonstrations of sorrow. If I did, I should be lying for sentiment’s sake. Among the higher officers and the most intelligent and conservative men, the assassination caused a shudder of horror at the heinousness of the act, and at the thought of its possible consequences ; but among the thoughtless, the desperate, and the ignorant, it was hailed as a sort of retributive justice. In maturer years I have been ashamed of what I felt and said when I heard of that awful calamity. However, men ought to be judged for their feelings and their speech by the circumstances of their surroundings. For four years we had been fighting. In that struggle, all we loved had been lost. Lincoln incarnated to us the idea of oppression and conquest. We had seen his face over the coffins of our brothers and relatives and friends, in the flames of Richmond, in the disaster at Appomattox. In blood and flame and torture the temples of our lives were tumbling about our heads. We were desperate and vindictive, and whosoever denies it forgets or is false. We greeted his death in a spirit of reckless hate, and hailed it as bringing agony and bitterness to those who were the cause of our own agony and bitterness. To us, Lincoln was an inhuman monster, Grant a butcher, and Sherman a fiend.”

Indeed, recalling the circumstances of that time, it is fairly appalling to consider what in 1865 must have occurred, had Robert E. Lee then been of the same turn of mind as was Jefferson Davis, or as implacable and unyielding in disposition as Kruger or Botha have more recently proved. The national government had in arms a million men, inured to the hardships and accustomed to the brutalities of war ; Lincoln had been freshly assassinated ; the temper of the North was thoroughly

aroused, while its patience was exhausted. An irregular warfare would inevitably have resulted, a warfare without quarter. The Confederacy would have been reduced to a smouldering wilderness, — to what South Africa to-day is. In such a death grapple, the North, both in morale and in means, would have suffered only less than the South. From both sections that fate was averted.

It is not my purpose to enter into any criticism of the course of events in South Africa, or of the policy there on either side pursued. It will be for the future to decide whether the prolonged, irregular resistance we are witnessing is justifiable, or, if justifiable, whether it is wise. Neither of these questions do I propose to discuss. My purpose simply is to call attention, in view of what is now taking place elsewhere, to the narrow escape we ourselves, thirty-six years ago, had from a similar awful catastrophe. And I again say that, as we look to-day upon Kruger and Botha and De Wet, and the situation existing in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, I doubt if one single man in the United States, North or South, — whether he participated in the Civil War or was born since that war ended, — would fail to acknowledge an infinite debt of gratitude to the Confederate leader, who on the 9th of April, 1865, decided, as he did decide, that the United States, whether Confederate or Union, was a Christian community, and that his duty was to accept the responsibility which the fate of war had imposed upon him, — to decide in favor of a new national life, even if slowly and painfully to be built up by his own people under conditions arbitrarily and by force imposed on them.

In one of the Confederate accounts of the great war <sup>1</sup> is to be found the following description of Lee's return to his Richmond home immediately after he had at Appomattox sealed the fate of the Confederacy. With it

<sup>1</sup> De Leon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals*, p. 367.

I will conclude this paper. On the afternoon of the previous day, the first of those paroled from the surrendered Army of Northern Virginia had straggled back to Richmond. The writer thus goes on: "Next morning a small group of horsemen appeared on the further side of the pontoons. By some strange intuition it was known that General Lee was among them, and a crowd collected all along the route he would take, silent and bareheaded. There was no excitement, no hurrahing; but as the great chief passed, a deep, loving murmur, greater than these, rose from the very hearts of the crowd. Taking off his hat and simply bowing his head, the man great in adversity passed silently to his own door; it closed upon him, and his people had seen him for the last time in his battle harness."

AFTER preparing the foregoing paper, I wrote to General Alexander asking him to verify my recollection of the account of what passed at his meeting with General Lee, at Appomattox. His reply did not reach me in time for the meeting of the American Antiquarian Society, at which the paper was read. In his answer to my letter he wrote in part as follows: "I am greatly interested in what you wish, having often thought and spoken of the contrast between Lee's views of the duty of the leaders of a people, and those held at the time by President Davis, and now held by Kruger and the Boer leaders; and I have written of it, too, in my own war recollections, which I am writing out for my children.

"*Essentially*, your recollections are entirely correct: though some of the details are not exact. Two days before I had talked with General Lee over his map, and noted Appomattox Court-house as the 'danger point.' When I came up on the 9th to where he had halted on the road, he called me to him, and began by referring to previous talk, and then he asked me, 'What shall we do to-day?' For an account of our conversation I will cut out of a scrap-book two pages which contain a clipping from the 'Philadelphia Press' of a letter I wrote twenty years ago."

The clipping referred to was from an issue of the "Press" of July, 1881. The narrative contained in it is, of course, now not easily accessible; but it is of such interest and obvious historical value, as throwing light on what was passing in Lee's mind at one of the most critical moments in the national history, that I here reproduce it in full:—

"The morning of the 9th of April, 1865, found the

Confederate army in a position in which its inevitable fate was apparent to every man in it. The skirmishing which had begun in its front as its advance guard reached Appomattox Court-house the night before had developed into a sharp fight, in which the continuous firing of the artillery and the steady increase of the musketry told to all that a heavy force had been thrown across our line of march, and that reinforcements to it were steadily arriving. The long trains of wagons and artillery were at first halted in the road and then parked in the adjoining fields, allowing the rear of the column to close up and additional troops to pass to the front to reinforce the advanced guard and to form a reserve line of battle in their rear, under cover of which they might retire when necessary. While these dispositions were taking place, General Lee, who had dismounted and was standing near a fire on a hill about two miles from the Court-house, called the writer to him, and, inviting him to a seat on a log near by, referred to the situation and asked : ‘What shall we do this morning?’ Although this opportunity of expressing my views was unexpected, the situation itself was not, for two days before, while near Farmville, in a consultation with General Lee over his map, the fact of the enemy’s having the shortest road to the Appomattox Court-house had been noted and the probability of serious difficulty there anticipated, and in the mean time there had been ample opportunity for reflection on all of the emergencies that might arise. Without replying directly to the question, however, I answered first that it was due to my command (of artillery) that I should tell him that they were in as good spirits, though short of ammunition and with poor teams, as they had ever been, and had begged, if it came to a surrender, to be allowed to expend first every round of ammunition on the enemy and surrender only the empty ammunition chests. To this General Lee replied that there were remaining only

two divisions of infantry sufficiently well organized and strong to be fully relied upon (Field's and Mahone's), and that they did not number eight thousand muskets together ; and that that force was not sufficient to warrant him in undertaking a pitched battle. 'Then,' I answered, 'general, there are but two alternatives, to surrender or to order the army to abandon its trains and disperse in the woods and bushes, every man for himself, and each to make his best way, with his arms, either to the army of General Johnston, in North Carolina, or home to the governor of his State. We have all foreseen the probability of such an alternative for two days, and I am sure I speak the sentiments of many others besides my own in urging that rather than surrender the army you should allow us to disperse in the woods and go, every man for himself.'

“ ‘What would you hope to accomplish by this ? ’

“ I answered : ‘ If there is any hope at all for the Confederacy or for the separate States to make terms with the United States or for any foreign assistance, this course stands the chances, whatever they may be ; while if this army surrenders this morning, the Confederacy is dead from that moment. Grant will turn 150,000 fresh men against Johnston, and with the moral effect of our surrender he will go, and Dick Taylor and Kirby Smith will have to follow like a row of bricks, while if we all take to dispersing in the woods, we inaugurate a new phase of the war, which may be indefinitely prolonged, and it will at least have great moral effect in showing that in our pledges to fight it out to the last we meant what we said. And even, general, if there is no hope at all in this course or in any other, and if the fate of the Confederacy is sealed whatever we do, there is one other consideration which your soldiers have a right to urge on you, and that is your own military reputation, in which every man in this army, officer or private, feels the utmost personal

pride and has a personal property that his children will prize after him. The Yankees brought Grant here from the West, after the failure of all their other generals, as one who had whipped everybody he had ever fought against, and they call him "Unconditional Surrender" Grant, and have been bragging in advance that you would have to surrender too. Now, general, I think you ought to spare us all the mortification of having you to ask Grant for terms, and have him answer that he had no terms to offer you.'

"I still remember most vividly the emotion with which I made this appeal, increasing as I went on, until my whole heart was in it; and it seemed to me at the moment one which no soldier could resist and against which no consideration whatever could be urged; and when I closed, after urging my suggestions at greater length than it is necessary to repeat, looking him in the face and speaking with more boldness than I usually found in his presence, I had not a doubt that he must adopt some such course as I had urged.

"He heard me entirely through, however, very calmly, and then asked: 'How many men do you estimate would escape if I were to order the army to disperse?'

"I replied: 'I suppose two thirds of us could get away, for the enemy could not disperse to follow us through the woods.'

"He said: 'We have here only about sixteen thousand men with arms, and not all of those who could get away would join General Johnston, but most of them would try and make their way to their homes and families, and their numbers would be too small to be of any material service either to General Johnston or to the governors of the States. I recognize fully that the surrender of this army is the end of the Confederacy, but no course we can take can prevent or even delay that result. I have never believed that we would receive

foreign assistance or get our liberty otherwise than by our own arms. The end is now upon us, and it only remains to decide how we shall close the struggle. But in deciding this question we are to approach it not only as soldiers but as Christian men, deciding on matters which involve a great deal else besides their own feelings. If I should order this army to disperse, the men with their arms, but without organization or control, and without provisions or money, would soon be wandering through every State in the Confederacy, some seeking to get to their homes and some with no homes to go to. Many would be compelled to rob and plunder as they went to save themselves from starvation, and the enemy's cavalry would pursue in small detachments, particularly in efforts to catch the general officers, and raid and burn over large districts which they will otherwise never reach, and the result would be the inauguration of lawlessness and terror and of organized bands of robbers all over the South. Now, as Christian men, we have not the right to bring this state of affairs upon the country, whatever the sacrifice of personal pride involved. And as for myself, you young men might go to bushwhacking, but I am too old; and even if it were right for me to disperse the army, I should surrender myself to General Grant as the only proper course for one of my years and position. But I am glad to be able to tell you one thing for your comfort: General Grant will not demand an unconditional surrender, but offers us most liberal terms — the paroling of the whole army not to fight until exchanged.' He then went on to speak of the probable details of the terms of surrender, and to say that about 10 A. M. he was to meet General Grant in the rear of the army and would then accept the terms offered.

"Sanguine as I had been when he commenced that 'he *must* acquiesce in my views,' I had not one word to reply when he had finished. He spoke slowly and delib-

erately and with some feeling; and the completeness of the considerations he advanced, and which he dwelt upon with more detail than I can now fully recall, speaking particularly of the women and children, as the greatest sufferers in the state of anarchy which a dispersion of the army would bring about, and his reference to what would be his personal course if he did order such dispersion, all indicated that the question was not then presented to his mind for the first time.

“A short time after this conversation General Lee rode to the rear of the army to meet General Grant and arrange the details of the surrender. He had started about a half hour when General Fitz Lee sent word to General Longstreet that he had broken through a portion of the enemy’s line, and that the whole army might make its way through. General Longstreet, on learning this, directed Colonel Haskell of the artillery,<sup>1</sup> who was very finely mounted, to ride after General Lee at utmost speed, killing his horse, if necessary, and recall him before he could reach General Grant. Colonel Haskell rode as directed, and a short distance in rear of the army found General Lee and some of his staff dismounted by the roadside. As he with difficulty checked his horse, General Lee came up quickly, asking what was the matter, but, without waiting for a reply, said: ‘Oh! I’m afraid you have killed your beautiful mare. What did you ride her so hard for?’ On hearing General Longstreet’s message, he asked some questions about the situation, and sent word to General Longstreet to use his

<sup>1</sup> Colonel J. B. Haskell, of South Carolina; “a born and a resourceful artilleryman, [who] knew no such thing as fear.” General Longstreet evidently used General Alexander’s paper in the *Philadelphia Press* in preparing the account, contained in his *Manassas to Appomattox*, of what occurred on the day of Lee’s surrender. A further reference to Colonel Haskell may be found in Wise’s *The End of an Era* (p. 360). Longstreet says that, at Appomattox, “there were ‘surrendered or paroled’ 28,356 officers and men.” A week previous to the capitulation, Lee’s and Johnston’s combined forces numbered considerably over 100,000 combatants.

own discretion in making any movements; but he did not himself return, and in a short while another message was received that the success of the cavalry under General Fitz Lee was but temporary, and that there was no such gap in the enemy's line as had been supposed. Soon afterward a message was brought from the enemy's picket that General Grant had passed around to the front and would meet General Lee at Appomattox Court-house, and General Lee accordingly returned.

"Meanwhile, as the Confederate line under General Gordon was slowly falling back from Appomattox Court-house after as gallant a fight against overwhelming odds as it had ever made, capturing and bringing safely off with it an entire battery of the enemy's, General Custer, commanding a division of Federal cavalry, rode forward with a flag of truce, and, the firing having ceased on both sides, was conducted to General Longstreet as commanding temporarily in General Lee's absence. Custer demanded the surrender of the army to himself and General Sheridan, to which General Longstreet replied that General Lee was in communication with General Grant upon that subject, and that the issue would be determined between them. Custer replied that he and Sheridan were independent of Grant, and unless the surrender was made to them they would 'pitch in' at once. Longstreet's answer was a peremptory order [to Custer] at once [to return] to his own lines, and 'try it if he liked.' Custer was accordingly escorted back, but fire was not reopened, and both lines remained halted, the Confederate about a half mile east of the Court-house.

"General Lee, returning from the rear shortly afterward, halted in a small field adjoining Sweeney's house, a little in rear of his skirmish line, and, seated on some rails under an apple-tree, awaited a message from General Grant. This apple-tree was not only entirely cut up for mementos within two days afterward, but its very roots

were dug up and carried away under the false impression that the surrender took place under it.<sup>1</sup>

“About noon a Federal staff officer rode up and announced that General Grant was at the Court-house, and General Lee with one of his staff accompanied him back. As he left the apple-tree General Longstreet’s last words were: ‘Unless he offers you liberal terms, general, let us fight it out.’

“It would be a difficult task to convey to one who was not present an idea of the feeling of the Confederate army during the few hours which so suddenly, and so unexpectedly to it, terminated its existence, and with it all hopes of the Confederacy. Having been sharply engaged that very morning, and its movements arrested by the flag of truce, while one portion of it was actually fighting and nearly all the rest, infantry and artillery, had just been formed in line of battle in sight and range of the enemy, and with guns unlimbered, it was impossible to realize fully that the war, with all its hopes, its ambitions, and its hardships, was thus ended. There was comparatively very little conversation, and men stood in groups looking over the scene; but the groups were unusually silent. It was not at first generally known that a surrender was inevitable, but there was a remarkable pre-acquiescence in whatever General Lee should determine, and the warmest expressions of confidence in his judgment. Ranks and discipline were maintained as usual, and there is little doubt that, had General Lee decided to fight that afternoon, the troops would not have disappointed him. About 4 P. M. he returned from

<sup>1</sup> The surrender took place in the house of a Mr. McLean, a gentleman who, by a strange coincidence, owned a farm on Bull Run at the beginning of the war. General Beauregard’s headquarters were at McLean’s house, just in the rear of Blackburn’s fort, during the first battle fought by the army, July 18, 1861. McLean moved from Bull Run to get himself out of the theatre of war. The last battle took place on his new farm and the surrender in his new residence.

the Court-house, and, after informing the principal officers of the terms of the surrender, started to ride back to his camp.

“The universal desire to express to him the unabated love and confidence of the army had led to the formation of the gunners of a few battalions of artillery along the roadside, with orders to take off their hats in silence as he rode by. When he approached, however, the men could not be restrained, but burst into the wildest cheering, which the adjacent infantry lines took up; and, breaking ranks, they all crowded around him, cheering at the tops of their voices. General Lee stopped his horse and, after gaining silence, made the only speech to his men that he ever made. He was very brief, and gave no excuses or apologies for his surrender, but said he had done all in his power for his men, and urged them to go as quickly and quietly to their homes as possible, to resume peaceful avocations, and to be as good citizens as they had been soldiers; and this advice marked the course which he himself pursued so faithfully to the end.”

Boston, November 6, 1901.

**The Riverside Press**

*Electrotyped and printed by H. O. Houghton & Co.  
Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.*



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 013 700 414 8